

AN
EPISTLE,
IN VERSE,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF
JAMES BOSWELL, ESQUIRE,
OF AUCHINLECK.

ADDRESSED
TO THE REV. DR. T. D.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL MARTIN, *K*
MINISTER OF MONIMAIL.

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YOUR bard's a tomb-stone, Sir, a passing-bell;
" MEMENTO MORI, bid the world farewell;
The soul shall live, the body shall arise:
There is a better world beyond the skies."

THE solemn monitory to inspire, 5
Nor search, my friend, nor fiction we require.

CAN thought be far from man? can grief and pain,
And death, and desolation, plead in vain?
Mortality on every hand appears:
The orphan's wailings, and the widow's tears; 10

By sea and land, the havock of the storms,
 And War's and Earthquake's more terrific forms;
 The craving church-yard, Time's destroying sway,
 Exertion's waste, Sloth's torpor and decay;
 Calamity, diseases, crimes, unite, 15
 To turn the soul from dissolute delight,
 To check the power of sense, and to restore
 Faith's all-composing, all-reviving power.
 Can mortal man forget that he must die,
 And but prepare for immortality? 20

WE do forget, alas! nor, as they ought,
 Faith's power is felt, Hope's consolation fought.

PASSION and imitation, hope and fear
 Of high enjoyment, or of ills severe,
 From dying man his dissolution hide: 25
 He sinks or floats in Dissipation's tide;
 And, lost to every great and manly scheme,
 His life becomes a trifle, or a dream.

SUCH is the human mind; or such, at least,
 The frequent feeling of your M.....'s breast: 30
 One striking recent instance has the power
 The reign of thought and reason to restore:

Beyond the church-yard, or the thousands slain
By storms, by earthquakes, by the bloody plain,
And the rude ravagers of human kind ; 35
And what can more compose, or fix the mind,
Than Boswell's funeral? , . .

At length, 'tis come,
The awful day that sends him to the tomb.
Boswell, no more ! Is Boswell, then, no more ?
'Tis felt, 'tis mourn'd, 'tis question'd o'er and o'er. 40

I SEE the man, the parent, and the friend :
The husband and the widower ascend ;
The pleader stands before me in his gown ;
The sportive humourist diverts the town ;
Anecdote and Biography appear, 45
Now to amuse, and now to draw the tear :
While his great Johnson is rever'd and painted,
His Boswell is more fully represented.

ANECDOTE and Biography unfold
A roll of what was done, and what was told 50
By Boswell, from his youth. With half his care,
Preserving what was good, and what was rare,
Another double quarto might be writ,
Fraught, too, with reason, fancy, mirth, and wit.

But see, our epitapho-epic fings, 55
 With great examples, in the midst of things ;
 Epitomizing, in her narrow plan,
 The striking, and the moral, of the man.

THE life of Johnson is a vast levee :
 Many we know, we love, we hear, we see ; 60
 But, never in the crowd entirely lost,
 The introducer's introduc'd the most.

AND who can meet the Ciceroni here,
 And not his every character appear?
 Alas ! his foibles, artlessly conceal'd, 65
 Shine through, where worth and virtues are reveal'd :
 Nor does the moral visitant explore
 Beyond ; for Boswell is, alas, no more !
 And the too prominent he notes, to say,
 " See, my young friends ! from what to turn away :
 Your faithful pilot, on a precious coast, 71
 Calls out, what has been, and what may be, lost ;
 Whence is your danger, how you may escape
 Damage and wrong, in an alluring shape."

MEN are not form'd alike, nor all alike 75
 Dress'd up and polish'd, like a gun or pike :

Parents and teachers, school-fellows and friends,
 Fashion, the times, new principles, new ends,
 Form that a blunderbuss, which well might be,
 In other management, a smart fusil ; 80
 Form that a spear, which else, with ruder work,
 Had been a boat-hook, or a plain pitch-fork.

WHAT share had nature, what his birth, his friends,
 His company, his principles, his ends,
 'Tis not for us to say ; but, certes, here 85
 Genius and eccentricity appear :
 Somewhat original did Nature feel,
 And Boswell made it more peculiar still.
 " I leave the beaten path ; I am, I shall
 Be celebrated, an original."— 90
 So Pride, or rather Vanity, has said :
 And very clowns originals are made :
 And had much wiser been, with honest folk,
 Nor hatching, nor exhibiting, a joke ;
 Nor hunters of anecdote, nor quite keen 95
 Of new, and rare, and odd, or heard or seen ;
 And willing to submit to toil and care,
 And pence, for the outré and the bizarre ;
 To be, or to be thought, queer, quaint, and new,
 And much obtrusive on the public view. 100

Much better had that care, and pence, and toil,
 And flagitated talk, and midnight oil,
 On what is plain and useful, been expended,
 On something good acquir'd, or bad amended ;
 Science to cultivate, or to attain 105
 Professional eclat, or honest gain ;
 To please a father, or to choose a wife ;
 In short, to be respectable in life.

YES, Boswell's character had been as good,
 Nor less befitting culture, prospects, blood,— 110
 Had the PECULIAR been less divulg'd ;
 Had eccentricity been less indulg'd ;
 Had he a busy mind restrain'd in time,
 And check'd his promptitude in prose and rhyme ;
 From just restraints less keen to be from under ; 115
 Less thought, less wishing to be thought, a wonder.

YES, solid, thinking men, like you and me,
 Mourn, not admire, his eccentricity ;
 His prison scenes ; his prying into death ;
 How felons, and how saints, resign their breath ; 120
 How varying and conflicting passions roll ;
 How scaffold-exhibitions show the soul ;

How Faith and Hope dispel the dismal gloom ;
 How harden'd Vice shrinks from the world to come ;
 How sceptics, in the near approach of death, 125
 Compunction feel, and settle into faith.

WE solid thinkers mourn him over keen,
 In almost every period, every scene.

WAS it his love of justice or applause,
 Made the enthusiast, in the Douglas cause? 130
 Made the success a jubilee too great,
 His own the titles and the duke's estate?
 And, as his Inverary Memoirs show,
 Render'd a duchess somewhat of a foe.

I AM, I own, a presbyterian whig,— 135
 But not, for this, a puritanic prig :
 And was not Boswell educated too,
 By father and by mother, a True Blue?
 The worthy judge esteem'd the kirk so pure,—
 And poor, to keep her purity secure : 140
 And, said the youth himself, the worthy faint,
 My mother, with the good Confession, paint.
 And is this man, th' admirer, too, of Blair,
 The patron of a Dun, the judge's heir,

Become a warm episcopalian tory, 146
Averse to whigs, and presbyterian glory?

WHY not? Act from conviction. Very true.
But solid thinking is persuaded too,
That there is some excess, in this new zeal,
Both for the church, and for the common weal. 150
Certes, as learn'd, as good, as sound, as he,
Have stood for the good kirk, and whiggery.

AND does not just and sober thinking say,—
Give not to rage of anecdote its sway;
Retail not conversation's free debate, 155
Thinking aloud, wit's flashes, or its heat;
Let not the moment's folly be engross'd,
Printed, and vended, never to be lost?
Anas, and table-talk, and Johnson's life,
May give delight, have often gender'd strife: 160
And fame reports our tourist knew full well,
All that one hears, it is not safe to tell:
To publish it abroad is still less safe:
Why should we know who rais'd the sigh or laugh?
What lady, or what sentiment was toasted? 165
And who the roaster was, and who the roasted?

Whose argument was good, whose voice was strong?
 And the comparifon of mind and tongue?
 How Johnfon's temper varied with his meal?
 How Wilkes fubdu'd him with choice bits of veal?
 Why fhould we hear the ravings of a Tory, 171
 And curs'd, and fligmatis'd, Britannia's glory?

I STILL retain, I truft, my name entire,
 A member of the fober thinking choir,
 As I proceed to mark, how ftangely he 175
 Cherifh'd Johnfonian idolatry;
 Himfelf degrading as the little bark,
 Attendant on the huge all-bearing ark.
 Yet, from this idolizer, 'tis, we find,
 The littleneffes of the giant mind. 180

THE rude, the trifling, the profound, the odd fee,
 In Pindar's Bozzy vying with Piozzi,
 The bear led by a man, at Lord Affleck's,
 The Urfa Major paying his refpects:
 Who but a bear could fay, without a grudge, 185
 Not worth a fous the judgment of the judge.

To borrow Garrick's language, This is he,
 The portly god of his idolatry,

Whom hospitality could not assuage,
 Fierce and confirm'd in anti-Scotian rage ; 190
 Whom bigotry would not permit to share
 The boon, to hear a Robertson or Blair :
 " No presbyterian tub shall Johnson see ;
 Yet, might I hear, would Blair ascend a tree."
 This, this is he, of madness-verging gloom, 195
 Whose superstition favours much of Rome ;
 Whose conversation carries you along,
 Alike, if he is right, if he is wrong,
 PARATUS IN UTRUMQUE ; and whose wit
 To check or failure deign'd not to submit : 200
 His pistol misses fire, on foe or friend,
 He lays them on the ground, with the butt-end.

'Tis he, whom breeding had not taught to bow,
 In a dissent, but with a No, Sir, No.
 Whose inspiration was the guineas paid, 205
 Essay and sermon-monger to his trade.—

ALAS ! alas ! from Boswell's life 'tis plain,
 Johnson was proud, irascible, and vain :
 On such a man of prejudice and whim,
 How could a Boswell fasten his esteem ? 210

Does it our pity or our mirth provoke,
Boswell is but the titling of the gowk.

MUCH to respect, I grant, the Rambler shows :
Much to the Dictionary Britain owes :
I stand his panegyrist to commend 215
The Christian, the Moralist, the Friend.
Nor yet can I refuse, disgust and shame,
Too oft, alas ! are fasten'd to his name :
And pity, and regret, prevent, in me,
This strange, Johnsonian idolatry. 220

MORE I lament, and cry, Beware, beware,
The love of company, the fatal snare :
To many fatal, nor to Boswell free
Of an injurious hilarity.

THE knot of friends, the club, the social hour, 225
What thought, what time, what bus'ness they devour !
The better purpose break, the better scheme
Defeat, and substitute an idle dream.
The stream of wit, and talk, and repartee,
Outrun calm reason and philosophy ; 230
Good sense o'er-run, and, as it bounds along,
Covers and drowns a sense of right and wrong.

A FAMILY reclaims, a wife deplores ;
 The head, and rule of peace are out of doors !
 See, education's venerable chair 235
 Is empty ; see extinct the parents care :
 See servants, now degraded, now become
 Masters, and more than masters of the dome :
 Because the masters are abroad, all glee,
 Thy votaries, conviviality ! 240

AND, in her service and her festive rites,
 Her various, and dear, dear-bought delights,
 Is there no mixture seen, no base alloy,
 Polluting, and debasing social joy ?
 Has never vanity employ'd her art ? 245
 Has never pride or envy touch'd the heart ?
 Has never folly ris'n, as reason funk ?
 Have never moralizing men been drunk ?

'Tis, Boswell ! in thy faithful page, I see
 The picture of conviviality ; 250
 And raise my warning voice, Beware, beware,
 The love of company, the fatal snare.
 See, I am seconded, in what I move,
 By reputation, fortune, health, and love ;

By duty, by enjoyment's self, I ween, 255
The innocent, the pious, the serene.

Is this, is this, methinks I hear the cry,
Is this embalming Boswell's memory?
Are these the elegiacs of a friend?
NIL NISI BONUM, nothing or commend. 260

No, Sir, in Johnson's manner, I reply :
To foibles friendship does not shut her eye,
Nor shuns the light, nor ventures to unfay,
Meekness may fret, and Patience curse her day.
A David and a Solomon may fall : 265
Cephas himself may be reprov'd by Paul.

Nor with unfeeling heart, or cruel hand,
I hold a scroll, his memory to brand :
As painted by himself, with passing eye,
We glance the picture, not without a sigh : 270
Not without much esteem, and much good will,
Friendship's embalming labours to fulfil :
Her feelings, and his merits to recite,
And place his virtues in the purest light.

But friendship's self will say, Beware, beware, 275
 And Boswell owns, I fell into the snare :
 Even from a savage and much clouded praise,
 His Johnson could an ethic labour raise.

TRUTH and affection join'd, your bard inspire,
 And thus he wakes the elegiac lyre : 280

" UNNOTIC'D and un Sung can he depart,
 The man of probity, of warmth of heart,
 Of public spirit, and of fervent zeal,
 To add new glories to the common weal,
 Extend her liberties, and to secure 285
 The throne its honours permanent and pure ?
 Can he depart, unnotic'd and un Sung,
 Whose wit pour'd from his pen and from his tongue,
 Whom history, law, and conversation claim
 Their own, and give a worthy son to fame ?
 Whose name to distant periods shall descend,
 Dalrymple's, Johnson's, and Paoli's friend ?

BUT with a touch more solemn we reverse
 The man of faith, and piety sincere :

Prayer was his stay, the gospel was his road 295

To virtue, to enjoyment, and to God."

Such Boswell was. Unheeded be my urn,

If truth and friendship thus your M..... mourn:

And let them frankly say, Beware, beware,

Whatever was his foible, or his snare. 300

Edinburgh
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NOTES.

VER. 53. *Another double quarto, &c.*] Alluding to Boswell's Life of Johnson, 2 vols. quarto.

Ver. 133. *And as his Inverary, &c.*] The Duchess of Argyll showed how she regarded Mr. Boswell's zeal at her own table.

Ver. 139. *The worthy judge, &c.*] It is said Lord Auchinleck, who liked a play of words, used to say, The kirk must be kept poor, that she may continue pure.

Ver. 142. *My mother, &c.*] Mr. Boswell said the Confession of Faith was the proper symbol for his pious mother, and that she would have made an excellent wife of a clergyman.

Ver. 144. *The patron of a Dun, &c.*] Late minister of Achinleck, a TRUE BLUE, author of sermons, with notes, which discover a good deal of humour, as well as zeal for orthodoxy, &c.

Ver. 161. *And fame reports, &c.*] Not in conversation only was it noticed that umbrage, embarrassment, and inconvenience, were the effects of "telling all that one hears," upon the publication of Boswell's Tour.

Ver. 172. *Britannia's glory.*] The Revolution and William III.

Ver. 183. *Lord Affleck's.*] The current pronunciation of Auchinleck is Affleck.

Ver. 184. Mr. Boswell acknowledges, that Lord Auchinleck called Mr. Johnson the *Urfa Major*, though he denied that the circulated occasion of it was the real. Till his son contradicted it, THE GOOD STORY was told thus: "After Mr. Johnson had left Lord Auchinleck's house in Ayrshire, Lord Auchinleck said: *James, you told me this man was not a star of the first magnitude in the literary world only, but a very constellation of stars: You are perfectly right, James, and his name is the Urfa Major.*"

Ver. 187. *To borrow Garrick's language, &c.*] The Stratford Jubilee.

Ver. 212. *Titling.*] The small bird that attends the cuckow, vulgarly pronounced the gowk in Scotland, expresses an inseparable companion of a greater man.

Ver. 264. *Meekness, &c.*] Moses and Job.

Ver. 266. *Cephas, &c.*] Epistle to the Galatians.

Ver. 292. *Dalrymple's.*] The late venerable and learned Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes.

Ver. 295. *Prayer.*] It was with affectionate concern and respect, that the author of this little ETHIC LABOUR, and cheerful tribute to the memory of Mr. Boswell, learned, that, to the end, and in prospect of dissolution, Prayer was his stay, &c.

